

## **Alpena County Compliance Review Issued December 2007**

At its December 2005 meeting, the Michigan Emergency Telephone Service Committee's (ETSC) Certification Subcommittee voted to perform a *for cause* compliance review of Alpena County 9-1-1. For cause reviews may be initiated based on reasonable suspicion of questionable practices. Reasonable suspicion is defined as objective and specific facts that are capable of being articulated. Compliance reviews are performed for the expenditures of funds generated through the provisions of the amended 9-1-1 Act, PA 32 of 1986 (the act). This includes: wireless revenues distributed to counties through the State; revenues collected through county 9-1-1 operational surcharges on landline phones; and dispatcher training funds distributed to primary public safety answering points (PSAPs).

### **Background**

In November of 2005 the State 9-1-1 Administrator's Office was contacted by Alpena County 9-1-1 director, Bruce Wozniak with concerns about cost allocation charges to Alpena County Central Dispatch. In addition to the cost allocation, further inquiry by Ms. Miller-Brown of the State 9-1-1 Administrator's Office revealed that Alpena County 9-1-1 did not have any type of emergency telephone service board or regular advisory meetings for its consolidated dispatch to resolve issues concerning dispatch services. There was additional information provided in regard to the status of wireless 9-1-1 implementation. Ms. Miller-Brown brought these matters to the Certification Subcommittee for discussion at its December 2005 meeting. After consideration of the information, the Certification Subcommittee voted to proceed with a *for cause* compliance review of the Alpena County 9-1-1 program.

Certification Subcommittee Chair William Charon named himself and subcommittee members Nystrom, Loftus, Loeper, and Miller-Brown to the Alpena County Compliance Review Team\*. The years 2003, 2004, and 2005 were determined as the time period for the review.

It is appropriate to note at this point in the report, the completion of the final report was delayed due to a number of circumstances beyond the control of the Compliance Review Team, including delayed receipt of information, scheduling, and the loss of review team members as noted at the end of the report. (As a result of the late issuance of this report, figures for 2006 are included in this document for informational purposes, but were not included in the review).

On December 15, 2005 a letter advising Alpena County of its review was sent to Mr. Bruce Wozniak, Director of Alpena County Central Dispatch. The letter requested the following information from Alpena County:

- The Alpena County 9-1-1 plan
- A copy of the 2003, 2004, and 2005 9-1-1 budgets
- Copies of agreements between the county and PSAPs (if more than one PSAP in the County)
- List of appropriate PSAP managers and their phone numbers
- Copies of budgetary reports or journals including the line items for 9-1-1 funds receipts
- Copy of indirect costs, if they are being charged to 9-1-1
- Copy of wireless training funds, revenue journal entries and expenditures
- Name of a point of contact person

The requested information was received by the State 9-1-1 Administrator's Office in a timely and organized manner.

### **Overview**

Alpena County 9-1-1 Central Dispatch (ACCD) receives the entire 9-1-1 call volume and dispatches for all emergency service providers within the geographical boundaries of Alpena County. Oversight for ACCD is performed through the Alpena County Controller's Office and the County Commission. At the initiation

of this review there was no Emergency Telephone Services Board established by the Alpena County Board of Commissioners. At the time of the initial review written policies for operations had not been fully developed nor implemented.

Alpena County implemented Enhanced 9-1-1 in 1993. The county became Phase I wireless 9-1-1 compliant in 2004. Phase II wireless 9-1-1 was reported as deployed in 2004. ACCD dispatches for three police departments, (including the Alpena County Sheriff Department, Alpena Police Department, and the Alpena Post of the Michigan State Police), a county-wide emergency medical service (EMS), and eight fire departments. In 2006, ACCD received 20,000 landline 9-1-1 calls, approximately 20,000 wireless 9-1-1 calls, and 90,000 seven-digit calls. ACCD logged 13,028 dispatched incidents in 2005. ACCD employs nine full-time dispatchers, one part-time dispatcher, and a director whose time is split between emergency management and 9-1-1. There is no administrative support for the director, nor are there line supervisors at the center.

The primary funding source of ACCD's operations is through landline surcharge of \$4.00 by vote of the county citizens. The landline surcharge was set at \$2.55 a month in August of 2003, it was raised to \$2.80 in April of 2005, and then raised to \$4.00 in May of 2006. Since the wireless 9-1-1 distributions began in 2000, Alpena County has been certified as eligible by the ETSC in 2000-2001, 2003-2007 (the 4th quarter distribution was withheld in December 2006, additional details follow in section regarding the February 2007 of this report) to receive its portion of state wireless 9-1-1 funds. Additionally, ACCD received wireless training funds in 2001-2005.

The dispatch center is housed in a shared facility with Probation and Parole and the county's Emergency Management Operations Center (EOC). ACCD has been allocated 1,762 square feet of the building. The ACCD facility has a secure front and back entrance, however, the front access is not used due to the potential exposure to the clientele of the probation/parole office. It houses the communications room, director's office, restroom, equipment, break room, mapping room, and conference/meeting room (shared with EOC). The 9-1-1 facility is paid to the county through its cost allocation system.

The 9-1-1 phone system is capable of taking Phase I and II wireless 9-1-1 calls. There is no computerized dispatching (CAD) system in place and incident tracking was maintained through a word processing system. There are PC-based radio consoles for the 800 MHz and VHF radio systems at each dispatcher position.

## **Review Process:**

### Meeting with Alpena County Coordinator Jeff Thornton on July 6<sup>th</sup> 2006

The review team confirmed that two 9-1-1 revenue sources were logged and tracked through their own individual accounting funds; Wireless revenue (Fund 211-325-608.00) and Landline surcharge (Fund 211-325-607.00). However, Wireless Training Funds were not tracked in a separate account. (Corrective action was taken and is noted later in this report).

The accounting reports also showed that an accumulating fund balance had been carried over from 2002 through 2006 (Fund acct # 211-000-390.00), for a cumulative total of \$110,433. The 9-1-1 monies (wireless and landline) are receipted by the county treasurer's office and notice of funds are sent to the director of ACCD. Accounting and payroll are performed by the county treasurer's and clerk's offices respectively. The operations of ACCD receive no general fund monies and pay for services received by the county through cost allocation.

### July 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006 visit to ACCD dispatch center

Telecommunicators Garavaglia and Filarski were on duty on the day of the on site compliance review, a third telecommunicator was scheduled for early afternoon. The center has three full primary dispatch consoles with 9-1-1 call screens and full radio functions.

There is an emergency generator and all critical equipment is connected to the generator and a system UPS. There is an extended-time recorder that logged radio and telephone transmissions. Each dispatcher also has access to short-term audio play-back at their consoles.

Dispatch staff has close access to the restroom and a break area. Shifts are staggered to staff with peak work times. There are two to three dispatchers on duty. The 9-1-1 director serves as the supervisor for day-to-day activity in the communications room. The director serves as the on-call contact for after-hours emergencies and the county coordinator serves as the director's back-up.

Routine warrants and PPOs are entered into LEIN by ACCD telecommunicators. The dispatchers are trained for emergency medical dispatch through the National Academy of Emergency Medical Dispatch (NAEMD) system. Pre-arrival instructions are not given on a consistent basis and the records for EMD certification at that time were not updated or complete.

#### **July 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 2006 Review Team Additional Observations:**

As listed below, the review found a number of issues of note relevant to wireless 9-1-1 statutory compliance and 9-1-1 fund use:

- 1) Fire call-out for the city of Alpena Fire Department is done on a radio tone-out basis. However, in order to activate the off-duty firefighters, ACCD telecommunicators are required to telephone the off-duty firefighters to advise them of the call.
- 2) Several wireless 9-1-1 calls were placed by review team members. In the process of confirming the Phase II re-bid procedures and mapping functions, it was apparent that the telecommunicators had not received training on the use of the re-bid or the mapping function needed to convert Phase I wireless 9-1-1 call into Phase II calls. Additionally, as the review team was performing the re-bid function, it became apparent that the delivery of latitude and longitude was not occurring on a consistent basis.
- 3) A computer aided dispatch (CAD) system that had been installed in early 2003. Accounting ledgers indicated that maintenance had been paid on that system in 2003, 2004, and 2005. However, that system had experienced problems when it was brought on-line and it had not been used by the telecommunicators since late in 2003. Maintenance payments on the CAD ceased after 2005.
- 4) Emergency medical dispatching (EMD) priority/pre-arrival cards were set up at the dispatch consoles, but dispatcher EMD certification records did not establish that all the dispatchers had been through training or that ACCD maintained their certification in accordance with their program's (Priority Dispatch) requirements. The lack of training and policies resulted in the inconsistent use of EMD at the dispatcher level.
- 5) The policy and procedure manual in dispatch was a partially indexed binder containing various documents including memos, policies, e-mails, and vendor information.
- 6) Because of shared duties with Emergency Management (EM), it appeared that much of 9-1-1 director's time between 2003 and 2006 was spent on EM functions.

#### **Preliminary Action:**

While on site, the review team requested that immediate action be taken to correct the wireless Phase II training of the dispatchers and the technical issue regarding the inconsistent conversion of Phase I wireless 9-1-1 calls to Phase II.

On September 12, 2006, in order to establish compliance, a letter requesting additional clarification and documentation on compliance with the statute and the ETSC's guidelines from Mr. Jeff Thornton was sent by Harriet Miller-Brown on behalf of the compliance review team. That letter included a request for:

- 1) A current list of ACCD employees
- 2) Timekeeping records for the 9-1-1 director and document on the travel expenses as divided between 9-1-1 and Emergency Management functions
- 3) A complete copy of the current policy and procedure manual that was being developed
- 4) Copies of the issuance of policy manuals and updates to the dispatch staff
- 5) Copies of current EMD certification for all the dispatch staff

Upon receiving incomplete responses to that request, follow-up to that request was issued in October and November, 2006. At the time of the November 30, 2006 ETSC Certification Subcommittee meeting, insufficient information had been received from Alpena County to certify the county as compliant with statute. On December 6, the County Board of Commissioners was notified that the subcommittee would be recommending that the county's fourth quarter certification for wireless funds be withheld pending confirmation of compliance. At its December 12, 2006 meeting, the ETSC voted to withhold the Alpena County 4<sup>th</sup> quarter funds pending confirmation of compliance.

The information requested was received by the State 9-1-1 Administrator's Office on January 19, 2007. Additionally, following the December 6, 2006 letter to the Alpena County Commissioners, the State 9-1-1 Administrator's Office received requests from commission members for various documents of 9-1-1 advisory structure and 9-1-1 policy and procedure manuals from other counties in Michigan. With assistance from other counties including Allegan, Ionia, and Clinton, the information was supplied to Alpena County in a timely manner.

**February 22, 2007 site visit to ACCD and attendance to newly formed 9-1-1 Advisory Board meeting:**

On February 22, 2007, William Charon and Harriet Miller-Brown made a second on site visit to ACCD. The newly hired 9-1-1 Director, Michael Szor demonstrated that Phase II was working. Each dispatcher on duty could successfully re-bid and plot location of wireless callers. Charon and Miller-Brown met with the 9-1-1 advisory board and explained the compliance review process. The board was informed that the compliance review team had noted their concerns in previous communications and would continue to serve as a resource to Alpena County for continued work towards improving their 9-1-1 system. The board was advised that a preliminary letter would be issued and recommendation would be made to the ETSC that Alpena County's fourth quarter funds for 2006 be released for distribution.

**Alpena County 9-1-1 Funding Summary:**

Annual Operating Budget for 2003 = \$ 581,553  
Annual Operating Budget for 2004 = \$ 639,405  
Annual Operating Budget for 2005 = \$ 628,602  
Annual Operating Budget for 2006 = \$ 669,879

Wireless 9-1-1 Payments 2003 = \$ 68,303  
Wireless 9-1-1 Payments 2004 = \$ 95,775  
Wireless 9-1-1 Payments 2005 = \$103,791  
Wireless 9-1-1 Payments 2006 = \$115,186

9-1-1 Surcharge 2003 = \$ 449,750  
9-1-1 Surcharge 2004 = \$ 567,304  
9-1-1 Surcharge 2005 = \$ 516,587  
9-1-1 Surcharge 2006 = \$ 605,087

## **Training Funds:**

At the time of the July 2006 site review Wireless Training funds were not maintained in a separate account. Additionally, there were several uses of the training funds that were not in compliance with the ETSC requirements. This included employee overtime and the attendance of courses that were not MCOLES certified at the time employees attended them. Further, Alpena County Central had \$4,231 unspent training funds from 2003, making them ineligible for the 2006 distribution. (Combined with 2004 and 2005 funds there remained \$13,242 in training funds).

Based on the accounting and training records of Alpena County Central Dispatch, Ms. Miller-Brown provided Mr. Jeff Thornton, the county coordinator (and acting 9-1-1 director) with an adjusted balance for the training funds. That letter was sent on September 12, 2006. On January 8, 2007 Mr. Thornton provided Ms. Miller-Brown with the documentation that the transfer of the corrected amount of wireless training funds had been moved into a separate account (211-235-728.001). Additionally, Mr. Thornton provided documentation confirming that Alpena County Central Dispatch had used an additional \$12,188 in 2006, making them eligible for the 2007 distribution.

Training Fund Distribution 2001 = \$2,089  
Training Fund Distribution 2002 = \$3,828  
Training Fund Distribution 2003 = \$6,923  
Training Fund Distribution 2004 = \$3,850  
Training Fund Distribution 2005 = \$5,161  
Training Fund Distribution 2006= -0-

Training Fund Expenditures 2001 = \$ 2,089  
Training Fund Expenditures 2002 = \$ 384  
Training Fund Expenditures 2003 = \$ 1,923  
Training Fund Expenditures 2004 = \$ 2,609  
Training Fund Expenditures 2005 = \$ 1,606  
Training Fund Expenditures 2006 = \$12,188

## **Findings and Summary**

While the years that were subject to the compliance review indicated that the ACCD system had largely functioned on without clear direction or oversight, the county began taking corrective action to address a number of those issues as early as August of 2006 and continue to be pursued at the time of this report. These actions include:

- 1) Training of dispatchers on Phase II call processing
- 2) Initial EMD certification or updated EMD training for all dispatchers taking 9-1-1 calls
- 3) Consistent use of the EMD protocols
- 4) The development of written policies and procedures for dispatching
- 5) The establishment of an Alpena County 9-1-1 Advisory Board in February of 2007
- 6) The holding of regular meetings of the Alpena County 9-1-1 Advisory Board

## ***Remaining Actions Required:***

- 1) Demonstrate adequate time for 9-1-1 director to provide for oversight of the daily operation of the PSAP operations. A review of the travel records and other records strongly indicated that the split of duties between 9-1-1 and Emergency Management Coordinator did not give previous 9-1-1 director the time and resources necessary to perform both positions effectively. The absence of administrative support staff was also a contributing factor in the allocation of time resources for the combined positions. With the selection of a new 9-1-1 director in 2007, it will be necessary that the position be structured in a manner to allow the 9-1-1 director to oversee the dispatch operation.

*Remaining Recommended Action:*

- 1) The time consuming method of individual call-outs for firefighters for Alpena program should be addressed. While the ETSC cannot dictate local policies, this particular local policy is one of concern in the interest of public safety of the entire citizenry served by ACCD. Given that there are options that exist for paging off-duty fire personnel without the time-consuming call-down process currently in use, the ETSC urges that this issue be addressed.
- 2) The completion of policy and procedures for the operations of the dispatch system.
- 3) A long-term plan should be developed for the operations and capital projects of ACCD. Currently, there are systems and equipment that, while functional, should be placed as priority issues for the ACCD system. This includes upgraded mapping and a functional CAD system. Investments in these systems in the past have not been fully utilized and proper use of technical advancements would enhance public safety response.
- 4) The terms of the agreement for the office space used by Central Dispatch are unclear. There should be some type of formal action to establish the parameters and costs of the space rented to Central Dispatch by the county for its 9-1-1 operations.
- 5) The current training program is not structured nor is it well-documented; a more formal and documented program such as a Communications Training Officer (CTO) program should be put in place to facilitate consistency in the training of new dispatchers.

In closing, based upon the documentation requested, made available to, and reviewed by the committee, along with the actions that have been taken by the county between August 1, 2006 to March of 2007, Alpena County and its 9-1-1 operations are functionally in compliance with the requirements of P.A. 32 (as amended) at this time. However, the past non-adherence to best practices warrants post-review follow-up action. As continued assurance and to assist the county in its forward progress with 9-1-1, a review team will visit the county within eighteen months of the issuance of this report to follow-up on current action as well as implementation of required and recommended action.

Submitted By:

Harriet Miller-Brown

James Loeper

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\* Due to his retirement prior to the completion of the review Sgt. Loftus was unable to participate in the review. Mr. Nystrom also retired prior to completion of the review. And Mr. Charon's unexpected death also occurred prior to the issuance of the Alpena County Compliance Review Report.